



Lake St. Martin First Nation

Box 69 ~ Gypsumville, MB ~ R0C 1J0 550 Berry St. ~ Winnipeg, MB ~ R3H 0R9
Telephone (204) 659-4539 Fax: (204) 659-2034 Telephone (204) 948-1119 Fax (204) 948-1142

Chief Adrian Sinclair

Councilor Greg Traverse Councilor Christopher Traverse Councilor John Ross
Councilor Kevin Traverse Councilor Emery Staggs Councilor Mathew Traverse

November 3, 2012

The Honourable Eric Robinson
Minister of Aboriginal and Northern Affairs
Province of Manitoba
344 Legislative Building
Winnipeg, MB R3C 0V8

The Honourable John Duncan
Minister of Aboriginal Affairs
Government of Canada
Ottawa, Ontario

c/o Anna Fontaine, Director General, Manitoba
Region

The Honourable Sam Katz
Mayor
City of Winnipeg
65 Garry Street
Winnipeg, MB
R3C 4K4

Dear Ministers:

RE: Lake St. Martin First Nation – School and Children

I write on behalf of Lake St. Martin First Nation to object to your joint decision to close the school attended by our children. I note that this decision was made as part of an evidently coordinated plan, involving (at least) the Province of Manitoba, Canada, and the City of Winnipeg. This plan was executed without any consultation with the First Nation, much less cooperative or constructive engagement in addressing the problems the City has identified in the school.

It is striking that the school was visited in August, 2011 by senior officials of both federal and provincial governments and against in August, 2012. No concerns were raised about safety within the school, at that time. The building was formerly the Deer Lodge Junior High School of

the St. James-Assiniboia School District. It was later used by the Province for vocational education and offices, without safety complaint.

The children of Lake St. Martin have already lost their home, access to the infrastructure, social and cultural institutions that were available to them on reserve, and daily contact they enjoyed with extended family and neighbours. These are the things that sustain us as a First Nation and a community. The children have experienced these losses solely because of Manitoba's decision to flood our reserve, with the inevitable result that our community has been destroyed. Their emotional and physical well-being has already been compromised by the Province, as has their social, cultural, spiritual, and education welfare. Several of our children have died as a result of these stressors, violently on the street or by their own hands. Our surviving children endure, in part, because they can rely on continued contact to each other, their relatives, culture and community, through the school.

Our ability to educate our children, together, in the First Nation's school was the last remaining thread holding our community together, spread as we are throughout the City. Without the school, our children will not know each other, and they will have no access to their culture, history and language. They will be lost to the First Nation, to the streets of Winnipeg. They and the First Nation will have no future.

It is shocking and entirely unacceptable that Canada, Manitoba and the City of Winnipeg now seek to impose these further losses onto our community and our children, through a unilateral decision to close the school.

Since our forced displacement from our homes, in May, 2011, Manitoba's representatives have repeatedly assured the First Nation that the Province will take whatever steps necessary to ensure that our members do not suffer unduly as a result of the Province's actions. These assurances apparently mean little. The Province has stood by while we struggled to find solutions to the difficulties at the school, and has provided neither resources nor expertise to assist us.

On behalf of our members and their children, we do not consent to the scattering of our children throughout Winnipeg schools. Such a dispersal would impose further incalculable and irreparable harm to our families and to the children.

We ask that the thus-far unidentified "deficiencies" and contraventions of the Winnipeg Fire Prevention Code be particularized immediately by the Winnipeg Fire Department. We propose that the school be closed for a period of one week for purposes of remedying these deficiencies, such that it can be re-opened on Monday, November 12, 2012. In view of AANDC's expressed concern for the children of the community, we ask that all necessary funding to ensure the prompt correction of these deficiencies be immediately made available. The subsequent allocation of responsibility for the funds expended is a matter that can be subsequently determined through negotiation or other means.

We call on Manitoba, Canada and the City of Winnipeg to meet with the First Nation's

leadership and property owner, on Monday, November 5, 2012, to discuss how to avoid further harm to our children's education, and social, cultural and psychological well-being, in a safe and appropriate environment.

Yours truly,


Chief Adrian Sinclair

Chief Adrian Sinclair

Cc: Premier Brad Selinger, Manitoba
Diane Papst, Acting Director, Legal Services/City Solicitor, City of Winnipeg
Gord Hannon, Province of Manitoba
Paul Anderson, Canada
Katherine Hensel, Hensel Barristers
Brendan van Niejenhuis, Stockwoods LLP
Grand Chief Derek Nepinak, Assembly of Manitoba Chiefs
National Chief Shawn Atleo, Assembly of First Nations